

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

Witness Statement

**TESTIMONY OF
EDWARD P. DOUGHERTY
SNOWMOBILE USER
PRIVATE CITIZEN**

I am an active, 55 year old T6/7 paraplegic, confined to a wheelchair since 1974. I hold a BS and MS in Physics. Born in Hershey, PA and residing in Valley Forge, PA.

I have been very active in outdoors activities since my youth. An accident in 1974 rendered me a T6/7 paraplegic. Since then, I have tried to remain active and maintain my independence continuing as best possible, to do the things I used to enjoy.

Snowmobiling has become one of my great joys, and it is my favorite way of enjoying the outdoors in winter. It allows me to exercise, keep my freedom, and independence.

I have visited Yellowstone and snowmobiled there three times, riding the entire lower loop. I particularly enjoy the less traveled areas, or what I call the back side; The Grand Canyon, Hayden Valley, and Fishing Bridge. Snowmobiling gives me the opportunity to be free, and go to places in the park where the snow coaches do not go. Additionally, the snow coaches are not wheelchair accessible. If I were carried into a snow coach, I would feel like a prisoner looking out of a window, forced to go only where the snow coach went. I would not go to Yellowstone if I was restricted to sitting in a snow coach as a passive observer; this is not freedom; this is not being outdoors; this is not being active.

Keeping Yellowstone and other Federal lands open to snowmobiling is important to me and other handicapped people, because it is a relatively safe environment and many private lands continue to be closed, due to development. Able bodied people have other possibilities, but for me, snowmobiling is the only way I have found I am able to feel free to travel and explore in winter.

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